



BACKGROUND

April 2006

The Bi-National Planning Group

The tragic events of September 11, 2001 prompted Canadian and United States officials to discuss means of improving the safety and security of citizens of both countries. One result of these discussions was the creation of a Bi-National Planning Group (BPG) in 2002, with an agreement signed by the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the U.S. Secretary of State.

Established for a period of two years, and later extended until May, 2006, the BPG's purpose is to enhance bi-national military planning, surveillance and support to civil authorities.

The BPG comprises about 50 Canadian and U.S. military and civilian personnel working side-by-side, encompassing significant military experience. They have unrestricted access to those involved in the Canada-U.S. defence relationship and are not governed by the day to day crises that require constant attention from commanders. As such, the BPG has been able to "take a bird's eye view" and make objective recommendations on how best to enhance Canada-U.S. defence cooperation, to better protect the people and economies of Canada and the U.S.

As an independent organization, the BPG operates alongside NORAD at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, to take advantage of existing infrastructure and proven capabilities and expertise.

Role of the Bi-National Planning Group

The BPG was created in response to the Canada-U.S. desire to prevent and mitigate threats or attacks by terrorists or other parties against either country, and to ensure a well-coordinated response to national requests for military assistance in times of disaster or emergency by:

- a) Preparing contingency plans to respond to threats and attacks, and other major emergencies in Canada or the United States
- b) Acting to prevent and mitigate threats or attacks through:

- a. Maintaining awareness of emerging situations through maritime surveillance activities
- b. Sharing maritime intelligence and operational information in accordance with national laws, policies and directives
- c. Assessing maritime threats, incidents, and emergencies in order to advise and/or warn Governments
- c) Designing and participating in exercises
- d) Conducting joint training programs
- e) Validating plans prior to approval
- f) Establishing appropriate coordination mechanisms with relevant federal agencies

Achievements

Over the course of its mandate, the BPG has had a significant impact on Canada-U.S. defence and security cooperation. Some of its achievements are outlined below.

- Worked with existing commands to draft a new Canada-U.S. Basic Defence document, and coordinated the development of a Combined Defence Plan, as well as a Civil Assistance Plan to outline bi-national military to military support to civil authorities.
- Introduced a Canadian Forces presence in the U.S. Northern Command Joint Operations Center.
- Created a bi-national document library, capturing more than 850 agreements and other documents related to Canada-U.S. defence and security.
- Completed a Final Report in March 2006, listing 32 major recommendations for enhancing Canada-U.S. defence and security cooperation.
- Enhanced shared strategic maritime awareness and warning between Canada and the U.S.
- Played a key role in re-vitalizing the Military Cooperation Committee and influencing the Permanent Joint Board on Defence.
- Developed and participated in bi-national training and exercises.
- Helped define the relationship among NORAD, U.S. Northern Command and Canada Command.

- Enhanced inter-agency cooperation.

For a copy of the Bi-National Planning Group's Final Report to Foreign Affairs Canada and the U.S. Department of State, please access the following websites:

www.canadianally.com/bpg

www.usembassycanada.gov